**Sermon for Proper 20-C**

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Aiken, South Carolina**

09-21-25

Luke 16:1-15

The theme for today is stewardship. Our Scripture readings all speak of the faithful management and proper use of the things that we have.

 Our lives; our health; our natural abilities and interests; our valuables; even our salvation; we possess none of these things, but that the Lord permits us, according to his will.

 Everything that we have is from God, and everything belongs, first and foremost, to him. Everything is intended to be used for godly purposes, to the glory of His holy Name.

So, how do we do that, and what’s more, who actually does that? The world and its possessions all belong to God, and he gives it all to us for our use and enjoyment.

There is nothing wrong with enjoying one’s life and one’s particular abilities, and possessions; but how easily we make an idol out of our physical life, and the things that we accumulate for ourselves.

 How frequently we forget that everything that we have, including our abilities, our interests and our inclinations, are to be channeled in ways that are pleasing to God. Because of our fallen nature, we are given to use our possessions and abilities only to please ourselves.

 We seek our own comfort and glory. We disregard the commandments of God, and the needs of our fellow man. For all of this, our condemnation is just.

Consider the unfaithful manager in our gospel text. What makes an employee unfaithful? It’s that they don’t care.

They don’t fear, love or respect their employer, nor do they have any regard for the things that have been entrusted to them; the needs that are their responsibility.

 Now; if employers are right to fire unfaithful employees, then what can we expect from God regarding our unfaithful management of His possessions?

 Proper, God-pleasing stewardship only happens from an attitude of thankfulness; thankfulness generated by faith in the new life that Jesus Christ has given to us through His own life, suffering and death, solely out of His perfect love and mercy toward us, despite our own unfaithfulness toward Him.

 Repenting of our sins, and believing that, for the sake of Christ’s atoning sacrificial death upon the cross, God the Father has declared us justified; innocent, it is the Holy Spirit who moves us to ask ourselves “How do I thank God for the eternal life and forgiveness that he has given to me?

 The new Spirit within us moves us to use our life, and everything in it, to thank and praise, serve and obey our Lord; and that means using our life in service to our neighbor. The soul who knows the love of God cannot help but to share God’s love with others.

Did you know that, even when doing the most seemingly menial task, you’re actually working for God? It’s true! Therefore, everything that a Christian does in faith is a good work. Faithful stewardship is motivated by love; the love of Christ that dwells within you.

Our management of the things of God; which, of course, is everything, is still not perfect, but we dearly want it to be.

 The love of Christ moves us to constantly amend our lives, seeking to do better; to reflect our Lord ever more in our mortal lives, while we look forward to a blessed eternity in paradise with Him, as He has promised, and as He has accomplished, for us.

 No; our management of our Master’s property is not perfect, for this side of eternity, we are never perfectly faithful.

 Repenting of our unfaithfulness, our lives are hidden in Jesus Christ, who was faithful in all things for us, so that our sins; our unfaithfulness, is no longer counted against us. It has been washed away by the blood of Christ.

 The debt that we owe has not been merely reduced; it has been eliminated. Not fraudulently, but honestly, in full payment, by Jesus Christ Himself. He has made us free to be thankful; free to be faithful; free to love as he loves us.

 May God the Holy Spirit always move us to embrace through faith this new life that we possess, and move us into the works that He calls us to do in His holy Name. Amen.